# **MEMO**

To: Aaron Clausen, Building Reuse Committee Chair

Cc: Kevin Harutunian, City of Beverly Chief of Staff

From: Nathan P. Etu, Consultant

Date: December 1, 2016

Re: Possible Briscoe Middle School Scenarios

## **Background:**

Three independent dilemmas have arisen for the City of Beverly: 1.) municipal departments need more operating and storage space; 2.) its Police Department needs an upgraded facility; and 3.) a large, public junior high school will be vacant in two years. Designs were drafted for a new police station 13 years ago, but construction never came to fruition. Both police and civilian departments are running out of employee and storage square-footage. At the same time, the students of the 93-year old Briscoe Middle School will transition into a newly-constructed complex in the Fall of 2018. Moreover, the idea of consolidating various municipal offices could prove beneficial for both the City and its people. After meeting with various stakeholders, after touring these facilities with private developers and architects, and after analyzing construction and transactional data from comparable projects in the North Shore of Massachusetts, the following outlines two feasible scenarios to consider.

Scenario 1: Build a new police station, relocate non-police off-site offices to the current police station, and release an RFP for the purchase and reuse of Briscoe Middle School.

### **Status of Current Police Station:**

The Beverly Police Department is comprised of 86 full- and part-time employees. While some are located off-site, most employees work from the 191 Cabot Street station, a facility far too small at 9,392 gross square feet (GSF). After touring the building with a local architect, the overall condition of the structure was deemed as fair. Issues such as lack of hot water, peeling paint, ADA accessibility, and asbestos were noted. A masonry load-bearing wall bisects both floors and the basement laterally—other interior walls appear to be non-load-bearing and thus movable. Two stairwells service the second floor, however only one provides ingress and egress to the basement.

Much of the building is standard office space and needs less rehabilitation to accommodate non-police use. Making it unique is the fortified evidence room in the basement, 10 holding cells on the first floor, a large locker room on the second floor, and the reinforced Officer-on Duty room near the front entrance. A garage used for vehicle maintenance doubles as a 2-bay sally port. The force has 22 vehicles, none of them fenced, and some of them are taken home at night by staff. Current building areas are as follows:

- Basement = 1.800 GSF
- $1^{st}$  Floor = 4,040 GSF

- $2^{nd}$  Floor = 2,352 GSF
- Garage = 1,200 GSF

An opinion of cost was calculated by the architect after completing his tour of the structure. His estimate to convert the current facility into non-police, municipal office space totaled \$3,898,000 in hard costs. He approximated 40% in soft costs, or \$1,559,200, for a total opinion of probable costs at \$5,457,200. Cost to retrofit per square foot ranged anywhere from \$200 for the basement to \$400 for the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. His estimate included approximately \$500,000 for an elevator and new stairwell that would provide better connectivity with City Hall's building.

## **A Newly-Constructed Police Station:**

The City owns 2.01+/- acres of land at 175 Elliott Street. Its deed restricts its land use to public safety only. This parcel is the southeastern-most tract of the Cummings Center, with 380 feet of frontage along Elliott Street. Because of its location, restricted land use, public ownership, topography, and land area, this would be one of the most appropriate sites for a new, standalone police facility.

On September 29, 2016, I met with Chief LeLacheur to discuss space constraints and needed amenities. The following is a list of features the Chief thought to be necessary for his department to operate successfully in the future: at least 2 sally ports, 2 female cells, 8 male cells, 1 juvenile cell, a PSAP and camera monitoring room, a records room, a booking room, a fortified evidence room, male and female bathrooms, male and female locker rooms with larger lockers, a roll call and training room, an officer-on-duty room, offices for captains, detectives, and the Chief, fenced parking, space for Animal Control, keyless door entry, etc. The following are features the Chief suggested could be beneficial, but not critical: a fitness room, a shooting range, a community room, an office for prosecutors, a break room, etc.

Donham & Sweeney Architects designed plans in 2003 for a proposed police and fire station at the Cummings Center, which never ended up being constructed. On October 7, 2016, myself and Jeff Shaw, Principal at Donham & Sweeney, toured Briscoe Middle School. Mr. Shaw agreed to provide two rough opinions: 1.) a cost to build a new police station at the Cityowned Cummings Center parcel; and 2.) a cost to retrofit Briscoe Middle School, including an area sufficient to house a consolidated police force. Not considering design fees, furnishings, or communication infrastructure, Mr. Shaw estimated for a new station at 175 Elliott Street to be: 36,000 GSF needed (x) \$450/GSF = \$16.2 million. His second opinion is provided below in Scenario 2.

Mr. Shaw's estimate meshed well with the recent new construction costs for another comparable community. The Gardner, MA police station included very similar amenities and for a slightly smaller force. Their new facility included 31,000 GSF at a price tag of approximately \$14 million, or \$452/GSF.

One large cost for both new construction or the retrofitting of public safety facilities is the State's structural requirements. While there is not one specific section with all factors codified, the IEBC, IBC and Chapter 34 of the MA State Code all form a picture of what needs to be performed. In order for a police station to withstand a "worst case scenario" and be able to perform critical services after a natural disaster, new structures must be built to a Seismic Code 4 standard. This requires significant steel beaming for all areas of the building considered to be essential to the station's function.

### **Relocate Non-Police Municipal Off-Site Offices to the Current Police Station:**

Efficiency and degree of customer service increase for both the City and its constituents when the distance between various public services are decreased. If all police assets currently stationed at 191 Cabot Street were to relocate to a new facility, 6,392 GSF (does not include basement or garage) of office space would become available for municipal, non-police departments. Such departments not already located at City Hall could include:

- Municipal Inspection & Building
- Health
- Weights & Measures
- Veterans' Services

These 4 entities are comprised of 17 full- and part-time employees and currently occupy roughly 4,600 GSF of space (1,500 GSF of which is dedicated to document storage for Inspection & Building).

As a rule of thumb used by many municipalities as well as the U.S. Government Services Administration (Office of Real Property Management Performance Measurement Division's July 2011 *Workspace Utilization and Allocation Benchmark*), an area of 200 SF typically provides sufficient space for an employee to function in a traditional office setting. This cannot be relied upon for staff of less traditional departments, like police. If providing the above 4 departments with 3,400 SF of space for its 17 employees, the first floor alone of the building currently housing the Police Department would be adequate, and the basement could serve as the new document storage area for Inspection and Building. This would leave an additional 3,000 GSF of extra office space that could be used by departments currently in City Hall. The 1,200 GSF garage would also then be available for reuse, most likely for storage. Note that while entities located at City Hall currently seem to have adequate space, the design and configuration of some offices may not be ideal. If the above 4 departments were relocated to 191 Cabot Street, perhaps the shifting of some offices and/or staff within the two buildings may prove more efficient.

#### Release an RFP for the Purchase and Reuse of Briscoe Middle School:

Briscoe Middle School is located at 7 Sohier Road and was built in 1923. It's primary surrounding land use is residential, and is bounded to the south by Colon Street and a Boston & Maine twin rail line. It's three stories and basement total 144,349 GSF on 8.14+/- acres and is zoned as multi-family residential. More than half of the parcel is vacant grass, parking, or service drives.

If the City was to decide to dispose of the property, a Request for Proposals may be released to the public in an effort to ensure the highest and best reuse of both the land and building. While portions of the land could potentially be parceled-off, significant desire for the main shell of the structure to be retained has been expressed by the public. Several experts have agreed, however, that portions such as the boiler room (2,000 GSF) and/or gymnasium (4,500 GSF) should be razed. Also, note that no analyst to date has been able to propose a feasible reuse plan that included retaining the auditorium.

While the disposing of similar properties inherently provides a challenge to research, sales of somewhat comparable buildings were found. The North Shore Regional Vocational complex in Middleton, MA is 100,903 GSF on 13.50+/- acres and was built in 1975. It was sold in October 2014 for \$4,725,000, or \$46.83/SF. The new buyer has plans to convert it into a business park. Similarly, the Ursuline Convent in Dedham, MA is 78,333 GSF on 27.61+/- acres

and sold in the same month for \$2,974,980, or \$37.98/SF. At the other end of the sales spectrum, Aquinas College in Newton, MA is 94,000 GSF on 6.02+/- acres and sold in August 2015 for \$15,350,000, or \$163.30/SF. The City purchased this to provide swing space for their public school system. Lastly, the Home for Little Wanders Children in Jamaica Plain, MA is 71,000 GSF on 3.50+/- acres and sold in November 2013 for \$10,127,857, or \$142.65/SF. This building was constructed in 1899 and is being razed for new construction of a 200-unit residential condominium complex.

Locally, the 109-year old McKay school in Beverly was sold by the City to Beverly Crossing for \$900,000 and reopened in July 2016. When purchased, the building's area totaled 41,706 GSF, resulting in a sale price of \$21.58/SF. The new use includes 32 residential apartments, 4 of which are classed as "affordable". The 1927 gymnasium was demolished and an addition was constructed for "townhouse-like" units. After demolition and additions, the structure is now 40,000 GSF on 2 acres. Another school rehabilitation was the 48,000 GSF Abraham Edwards school at 45 Rantoul Street. This 1.16+/- acre site was sold by the City to Cabot Harbor, LLC in January 2005 for \$1,801,000, or \$37.52/SF. This is now a 28-unit residential condominium complex.

Scenario 2: Release an RFP for the purchase and reuse of the current City Hall and police station and consolidate most municipal departments to Briscoe Middle School, including police.

#### **Retrofit Briscoe Middle School for Most City Departments:**

City Hall currently has off-site municipal offices as well as a separate building that houses the school department administration, and it could better serve both the City and its people to see its many municipal offices positioned in a central location. Entities not necessary to be involved in such a consolidation would likely include DPS, Library, Harbor Master, Airport, Fire Department, Council on Aging, Civil Defense, and Parks and Recreation. There is little question that a now-vacant Briscoe Middle School, even after any partial demolition, has enough space to house all City entities deemed appropriate to be consolidated to the school. In fact, if all but the above-mentioned departments, including Police, moved to Briscoe, tens of thousands of square feet might still be unused.

As part of a 2014 feasibility study of Briscoe Middle School, a base repair cost was itemized. This estimate details expenditures for minimal renovation to meet code and regulatory compliance, and to address major mechanical systems in need of upgrades. Costs for building and site work were estimated at \$17,935,000, with an additional \$4,633,050 in design, management, furniture, contingency, and other miscellaneous costs.

After touring the school and analyzing its strengths and weaknesses in early-October, Jeff Shaw of Donham & Sweeney provided a rough opinion of what it may cost to renovate and retrofit the facility for the consolidation of municipal departments, including police. He concluded \$38-\$50 million. This cost does not account for exterior restorations, which Mr. Shaw could not determine without a more detailed analysis. This cost does, however, include \$8-\$10 million for seismically retrofitting the building, renovation costs of \$25-30 million, and \$5-\$10 million in additions for police functions. Shaw assumed a demolition of the rear boiler room and gymnasium, and a less intensive intervention of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. His primary vision for the police station would be in the rear, where the boiler room and gym would be removed. That demolition

would provide appropriate space for new steel beaming and an "insertion" of the new police facility into the retained shell.

The potential for "too much" space could present itself as a problem. Even after assuming selected demolition and many municipal offices relocating to Briscoe, significant space could be left vacant and unused. Not being common for a municipal government to lease portions of its City Hall to private tenants, "dead space" or underutilization of space could result. Making minimal upgrades to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and leaving as dead space or razing more area than initially thought to be needed could lessen the potential for this issue.

### Release an RFP for the Purchase and Reuse of 191 Cabot Street:

City Hall and the current police station are located at 191 Cabot Street, a 0.804+/- acre parcel in Downtown Beverly. The 3-story City Hall building is 24,840 GSF when including the basement. Again, the adjoining police station is an additional 9,392 GSF when including its basement. City Hall was built in 1785, the police station was built in the 20<sup>th</sup>-Century, the parcel is zoned Central Business, and the total assessment for land and buildings is \$2,166,800.

Current constraints for the City include parking, needed building upgrades, and lack of space for both employees and storage. While structural upgrades may not be enormous, parking for City employees is sparse and forces them to park along adjacent residential streets. If City Hall was to relocate to Briscoe Middle School, and the school went through the necessary renovations, these issues would be alleviated. Depending on the reuse of this property, the disappearance of City Hall employees and its visitors could have an adverse effect on commerce downtown.

Just as with the hypothetical of selling Briscoe Middle School in Scenario 1, if conveying 191 Cabot Street to a private buyer, the City may likely issue an RFP. Comparable sales were researched under the following criteria:

- 1. sales after October 1, 2012
- 2. 20,000-35,000 GSF
- 3. office use
- 4. submarkets in:
  - a. Amesbury-Ipswich
  - b. Danvers-Beverly
  - c. Essex-Gloucester
  - d. Peabody-Salem

While this research yielded \$/GSF sales of \$45-\$118/GSF (the low and high end of this spectrum were both found in Beverly), the median \$/GSF sale price was \$66.63/GSF. Smaller buildings (9,000-12,000 GSF.) within similar search criteria have sold for nearly the same exact median \$/GSF. The Odd Fellows Building at 188-194 Cabot Street sold in March 2016 for \$2,965,000, or \$86.10/GSF. This was a 34,437 GSF structure built in 1893 and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

If sold to a new developer, it may be feasible to raze the police station to accommodate more parking. Rehabilitating City Hall for a new use could also qualify for historic preservation tax credits, but only if done within the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's standards. One possible reuse other than mixed-use/residential could be a hotel. Facts such as the structure's size, layout, downtown location, and lack of any other hotel in the area all lend themselves nicely to such a reuse. Distance from I-95 and Route 128 do not augment the feasibility of this reuse.